

Tape 36 !

Side A, 1/8 - 1/4

11 December 1978

STAT MEMORANDUM FOR:

FROM: DCI

When I am gone on leave and the trip, the stewards will pick up our mail that is delivered to the Naval Observatory post box on a regular basis. Would you periodically have someone pick it up from the Quarters and ask Gary or someone here to screen it. Because our address in the Washington "Green Book" is at the Observatory, we frequently get invitations at home and some on short notice. I'd appreciate your having someone make sure nothing falls between the cracks.

*Cy RRR*

The Shi'ites have played a rôle in Iranian politics since the latter half of the 19th century, coming to the fore in the tobacco rebellion of 1895. They were important in the constitutional movement of 1904-5, which resulted in the adoption of an Iranian constitution. Perhaps most interesting was their part in the Mossadegh coalition. They supported Mossadegh even after he had nationalized the Iranian oil industry, though broke with him by the time of the CIA coup. Their opposition to the Shah is nothing new.

In sum, the Shi'ites have several important characteristics: they are strongly anti-imperialist, whether against the United States, Great Britain, or the Soviet Union. They are firm constitutionalists and flatly against the monarchy. They are reformist in the social-democratic sense. They believe in reform so long as it does not disturb the merchants of the cities and the middle peasant class. That is why they can be referred to in the American sense as populists.

This background was entirely misunderstood by U.S. intelligence analysts and by most of the American press. Viewed from this perspective, it is possible to see why opposition to the Shah—scattered as it is preeminently among the Shi'ite Muslims—is not likely to abate or be deflected by last minute political manipulation.

From Tehran itself comes news of gloom expressed in the most traditional way: a decline in the housing market. Real estate prices in the richer parts of town have fallen by as much as 70 per cent. Many affluent Iranians are moving into somewhat poorer areas in the hope that they will thus escape the riotous populace, stampeding on errands of arson and pillage.

Former intimates of the Shah continue to flee. On the most-wanted-back list in Tehran are two important refugees. One of these fugitives is Parviz Sabeti, formerly the effective head of Savak and also in charge of the interrogation center in Tehran. He hijacked a Savak plane and is now in hiding in France. The other is Hushang Ansai, former minister of finance and reputed to be the most corrupt official outside the Royal Family itself. The official story is that Ansai is undergoing medical treatment in the U.S. This is not widely believed. Both have been threatened with confiscation of their property unless they return.

Those who might be inclined to take at face value the Shah's announcement of a new era for human rights in Tehran, release of political prisoners, and diminution of torture, should study the account of a recently released British prisoner, as reported in the *International Herald Tribune* for last weekend.

Richard Savin, a licensed British arms salesman, arrested in 1976 for smuggling hashish (a charge he says was a frame-up), spent two and a half years in Vakilabad prison in eastern Iran. His descriptions defy belief. All newly arrived prisoners were housed automatically in the block reserved for the criminally insane. Those lucky enough to survive usually spent some of their sentence in isolation cells measuring one meter square. Political prisoners, of whom there were 350, were subjected to daily beatings and tortures, including electric shocks to the temples, red-hot needles under the fingernails, and a favorite at the jail, "the hot egg tango," so-called "because it makes you thrash about quite a bit." The treatment consists in forcing a scalding, hard-boiled egg up the rectum of the prisoner. "It slowly cooks your insides," Mr. Savin said. "Also popular was anal rape with riot sticks." Juvenile prisoners were routinely raped by prison officials and then sold to the convicts.

Any Afghan prisoner complaining about treatment would have his mouth sewn up with thread for a couple of days. Savin says he saw Afghans "being made to walk on all fours, licking the ground as they went and being forced to clean out toilet bowls with their tongues."

He says that international teams investigating treatment of prisoners were often shown Iranian army troopers rounded up and dressed for the occasion. Savin, after an endless litany of such horrors—about which he is writing a book—concludes: "The Shah's claims that no tortures or beatings go on in his jails are complete rubbish. It is also totally untrue that thousands of political prisoners have been pardoned. Maybe one or two were let free at Vakilabad, but no more."

Barbara Walters, recently observed on a date with Ardeshir Zahedi, Iran's ambassador to the U.S., might care to interview Savin on ABC News, if possible before a studio audience of New York's cafe-society supporters of the Shah—ranging from Marion Javits through Andy Warhol and his Factory workers to liberal party goers at the home of Fereydoun Hoveyda such as Shirley MacLaine and others. Many of them still maintain that the Shah is one of the great reformers of the 20th century.